

Given the contradictions arising from the international debt crisis, from the process of globalization and trade driven by the great inequalities between the rich nations and the poor nations, one would assume that America would be sensitive and responsive to an attempt to clarify that history and examine means of redressing the wrongs of slavery and racism.

One would assume that America would feel a powerful sense of responsibility to share those experiences, because we understand the immense human, social and economic costs associated with the evils of racism and discrimination.

Unfortunately, if one were to make those assumptions, one would be wrong. Our State Department has indicated that the United States will not attend the World Conference unless two items are struck from the proposed agenda: The characterization of Zionism as racism, and the issue of reparations for slavery and colonialism.

In international forums from Ireland to the Mideast, from Southern Africa to the Indian sub-continent, America has always insisted that problems cannot be solved, that differences cannot be narrowed, if we refuse to discuss them.

Suddenly America has become the loner in world diplomacy, insisting it is our way or no way. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Germ Warfare Treaty, the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty, and now the World Conference on Racism.

What kind of superpower are we? Are we about democracy, about democratic process, about transparency and mutual self-interest? Or are we about imposing our will on international consultations, about insisting on predetermining the outcomes of discussions between nations?

Only those who fear the outcome of fair and open discussion have reason to refuse to engage in debate and discussion. I believe that we have nothing to fear in openly and honestly exploring history and in repudiating racism.

It is time to come to grips with racism and the legacy of racism. It is in our national interests and in our international interests.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has correctly defined the problem. He stated we need to "find ways to acknowledge the past without getting lost there; and to help heal old wounds without reopening them."

If America is serious about its affirmation that racism and democracy are fundamentally incompatible, and I think that we are serious about it, then America must be at the table on August 31.

So I would hope, I would pray, and I would urge that America do in fact attend the conference, participate, and explore with the rest of the world attempts to find solutions to our past and present problems.

RESPONDING TO SECESSIONIST ARGUMENTS AGAINST INDIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to respond to statements made by some of my colleagues in their extensions of remarks on July 24. Their reference is to various secessionist movements in India.

My colleagues suggest that Muslims in Kashmir and Sikhs in Punjab, among other religious and ethnic groups in certain Indian states, have the right to separate their states from the Indian Nation. They seek the United States' support for secession. But their theory is not based on the American experience.

These critics deem the recent landmark summit between India and Pakistan a failure because it did not produce any substantive agreement over Kashmir. They argue that Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's refusal to speak extensively on Kashmir was a testament to India's contempt for democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw a parallel between India, the world's largest democracy, and our own democracy in the United States. We cannot forget the principles on which this Nation was founded and the war we fought to maintain these principles, for it was in the Civil War that the Union fought to keep the South from seceding and to keep this Nation united.

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It was South Carolina's act of secession that was fiercely battled on American soil to keep the United States together at any cost. Americans refused to give in to the South's secession on ideological grounds and vehemently denied any right to secession based on the Constitution or the American historical experience. The framework of this Nation is founded on the fundamental notion that States cannot secede.

My colleagues condemned India for trying to keep the Nation together. India is a model for democracy in the South Asia region. India is supporting the same ideals that shaped the history and success of the United States. We should support India in its opposition to State secession.

Americans cherish the unity and patriotism that we fought so hard to maintain during the Civil War. India is fighting a battle that America fought in the 19th century and all for the same outcome: a united country.

My colleagues have made claims that India is not one nation, but rather a multinational state put together by the British for administrative convenience. Their claims ignore India's history, its independence movement, and the principles on which India was founded.

India was founded as a secular state based on an equality of religions. Secularism is the thread that holds together the fabric of diversity that characterizes India. Muslims and Sikhs do not need to secede from such a nation. Secession based on religion or any other ideological principle goes against the secularism that India stands for, and it is the secularism that India cannot afford to compromise in its fight for democracy.

Mr. Speaker, a divided India is a recipe for chaos. A peaceful and smooth transition to a split India is not feasible. With the diverse array of regions, 18 official languages and 17 freedom movements in India, the breakdown of India would be disruptive for its people and the international community. A divided India is more susceptible to outside influence and the possible resurgence of colonialism. For a country such as India, unity is its strength.

While a joint agreement may not have come out of the India-Pakistan summit in July, we must realize that India has a sincere desire to improve relations with its neighbors. A united and strong India is a necessary prerequisite for cultivating a positive relationship with not only Pakistan, but all of South Asia.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSBORNE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDI. Mr. Speaker, we are once again approaching a national discussion with the regard to the issue of immigration, and I am glad we are doing so because it is, of course, an important one.

I am concerned because many times this particular issue is one that we are reluctant to deal with. We are reluctant on the floor of the House; we are reluctant oftentimes in the court of public opinion to discuss the issue of immigration or immigration reform for fear that somehow or other our concerns on this particular topic would be interpreted as being either anti-immigrant or racist in nature.

But it is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that it is one of the most significant and perplexing problems we face as a Nation. It is, I think, one of the most serious of the domestic policy issues that we face as a Nation, because it affects us in a variety of ways. Massive immigration into the United States, especially massive numbers of illegal immigrants into the United States, cause a number of problems. They cause problems not just for people in the United States, but they cause problems even for those coming in.

We have heard, of course, many times of the situations that have occurred as people have come across the border,